

EMOTION, ATTENTION AND IDIOLECTAL VARIATION IN RADIO NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT. *This paper studies the discursive devices narrators of highly emotional radio oral narratives use in order to guide the listener through the multiplicity of stories which unfold through the narrative process. The main aim of this paper, thus, is twofold. First, to describe the specific features of this narrative text type using the latest developments in discourse production and comprehension analysis coming from Cognitive Models of language –Attention Phenomena and Mental Spaces and Conceptual Integration Theory (Talmy 2000, 2007, 2008; Langacker 2001, 2008; Fauconnier and Turner 2002), as well as from functional approaches to oral discourse segmentation (Redeker 2006). And second, it analyses one of the main attention guiding strategies of oral discourse: the use of discourse markers. More specifically, the paper addresses the question of whether, in the texts under study, there is a fixed repertoire of markers with polysemous meanings and functions which are collective and common to this discourse type, or whether individual preferences can also be detected.*

KEY WORDS. *Radio oral narratives, discourse markers, narrative segmentation, mental spaces, idiolectal preferences.*

RESUMEN. *Este trabajo estudia los mecanismos discursivos que se usan en narraciones orales de alto contenido emocional con el fin de guiar al oyente a través de la multiplicidad de historias que se desarrollan en el proceso narrativo. El objetivo principal de este trabajo, por lo tanto, es doble. En primer lugar, describir las características específicas de este tipo de textos narrativos utilizando los últimos avances en el análisis de la producción y comprensión del discurso provenientes de modelos cognitivos del lenguaje: los Fenómenos de Atención y la teoría de la Integración Conceptual y los Espacios Mentales (Talmy 2000, 2007, 2008; Langacker 2001, 2008; Fauconnier y Turner, 2002), así como de un aproximación funcional a la segmentación del discurso oral (Redeker 2006). En segundo lugar, analizar una de las principales estrategias para guiar la atención en el discurso oral: el uso de marcadores discursivos. En concreto, el artículo aborda la*

cuestión de si, en los textos analizados, existe un repertorio fijo de marcadores polisémicos que son comunes a este tipo de discurso, o si también es posible detectar en su uso preferencias individuales.

PALABRAS CLAVE. Narraciones orales en la radio, marcadores discursivos, segmentación de la narración, espacios mentales, preferencias idiolectales.

1. INTRODUCTION

Previous work in the analysis of oral emotion discourse¹ has found: (i) That this type of text, far from having a linear and causal structure, is constantly broken by comments, justifications, explanations, background information, etc. (Romano, Porto and Molina 2013). (ii) That there are specific linguistic and pragmatic strategies narrators make use of in order to disclose highly intimate and painful information (Romano 2008). (iii) That narrators display specific discourse markers to guide listeners' attention through the string of stories, transitions and emotions, characteristic of this text type (Romano and Porto 2010). And (iv), that both the structure and type of discourse markers vary along a narrative cline, from more artificially elicited and neutral in contents to more spontaneous and emotional texts (Cuenca et al. 2011).

In this paper two new research questions are addressed. In the first place, the study wishes to unravel whether the discourse markers identified show specific forms and functions for each narrative segment or transition or, on the contrary, the same markers or cue expressions can fulfil any of the functions identified and are, therefore, polysemous or polyfunctional. And in the second, whether there is a common repertoire of discourse markers within this discourse type, that is, whether the markers are collective or common to this specific text type or, individual preferences in their use can also be identified.

In order to answer these new questions, the following steps have been taken. First, in section two, the data –Spanish radio oral narratives of highly emotional events– are described. Next, in section three, we present the most significant theoretical concepts, coming from Cognitive Models of language, which have helped to understand the main processes which enable hearers to make sense of the chaotic information presented in this particular type of discourse. In section four, we describe the methodology, which follows in the main Redeker's (2006) functional approach to oral discourse segmentation. Finally, section five presents both a quantitative and qualitative analysis and discussion of the data. The study concludes with the finding that a common repertoire of discourse markers exists, but at the same time, idiolectal variation in the use of these markers has been identified; that is, individual preferences of the speakers which are repeated throughout the same narrative.

2. RADIO ORAL NARRATIVES OF CHARGED EVENTS

The narratives under study belong to a corpus of oral narratives from a Spanish agony column radio programme in which people call to speak about their most intimate

worries or problems. The data were recorded and then transcribed from the Spanish programme *Hablar por hablar* (Cadena Ser), a late night programme broadcast in Spain for the last twenty years. Ten narratives, five recounted by men and five by women, were selected randomly from the corpus for the study. No details about the narrators: exact place of origin, age, socio-cultural background, etc., except gender and that they are all native speakers of Standard Spanish, were accessible due to the characteristics of the media and programme used for the sources. The average length of the narratives under study ranges from 300 to 600 words, including a total number of 4,048 words for this analysis. This typology of programme was chosen because it contains highly emotional and natural –non-planned– discourse in which speakers feel free to talk about their concerns in an anonymous setting and are therefore very close to natural language.

Another characteristic worth mentioning is that this radio programme does not show a very collaborative structure. People call either to share their problems with the listeners overtly or in response to previous callers seeking advice. In this sense, anonymous listeners can only provide indirect feedback by calling back later during the same programme or some days or even weeks later. The presence of the radio presenter is barely noticeable and passive, using continuers only to help narrators proceed with their stories and decide whether they have come to an end or not. The narratives are, thus, delivered with almost no interruptions. In addition, narrators and listeners, as complete strangers, share no common individual background knowledge, a fact that is also going to influence the linguistic features of this text type. All these features point out at the social and institutional factors of this specific radio speech event².

Due to the idiosyncratic contextual setting of radio narratives, that is, their non-prototypical setting and participants, the oral narratives under study share characteristics both of monologued texts and of dialogical or conversational narratives. These texts, thus, can be placed along a ‘continuum of narratives’ (Ochs and Capps 2001; Romano 2008), somewhere in between monologue and dialogue.

Along the ‘continuum of narratives’, the ‘monologued’ characteristics of these texts would be: First, that the recipient of the narration is not a prototypical listener since s/he is not present and is, therefore, not as verbally active as the participant in a dialogue. Second, there is just one single active speaker telling the story, with few verbal interruptions, commentaries or conversational-enhancers from the interlocutor. And third, the speaker is eager to keep on the same and constant argumentative line or stance that leads him/her to the goal set, a fact that influences the use of specific linguistic and pragmatic strategies: intonation, discourse markers, repetitions, redos, silences, clicks, respiration and profusion of details, in the main. These are the basic strategies with which the narrator wishes to secure an empathic response.

As for those characteristics which bring oral narratives of charged events closer to the ‘multiple, co-constructed’ pole (Ochs and Capps 2001; Romano 2008), the following are especially relevant. First, they are still interactive texts because listeners are ‘present’ and the speaker feels that their presence matters. This is the reason why the conductor of the programme inserts short remarks and responses as continuers. Secondly, due to their

emotionally charged contents, they show a highly fragmented, non-linear temporal and causal organization which is constantly broken by different parenthetical material such as commentaries, digressions, flashbacks, flash-forward, etc., which are contained in the many side-stories of the narratives.

As a sample of the fragmented structure of this kind of narratives, below we present the beginning, of one of these stories, HbN3 (*Son won't go out*)³. It is told by a mother who calls the radio program because her son does not want to go out after his girlfriend died in a car accident. In our analysis, the whole story –430 words– consists of five sub-stories and can be segmented in 14 fragments. In the first 23 lines below, it is possible to distinguish 8 segments: Lines 1, 8-13 and 19 are the three fragments that make up the main story, i.e. the mother is worried because her son doesn't want to go out. The other fragments are part of side story 2 (lines 2-6), which includes background information on the death of his girlfriend, story 3 (lines 14-17) informs listener of the narrator's purpose for calling: 'I don't know what to do, I need help' and stories 4 (line 18) and 5 (lines 20-23) expand information on their relationship and how good and hardworking her son is.

Narrative HbN3 (lines 1-23):

- 1 *I've got a son who ... (click)*
- 2 *well, it's now ... about two years since he had a ... a girlfriend.*
- 3 *They were going to get married and ... had already everything ...*
- 4 *and it turns out that ... mmm... the day before Epiphany (deep breath)*
- 5 *well in the car she was*
- 6 *and ... she had an accident and died.*
- 7 *I'd like to know what ...*
- 8 *Because there is no way to get him out ... since then*
- 9 *He's absolutely mmm ... inside the house,*
- 10 *he doesn't want to go out (deep breath),*
- 11 *he's very anxious*
- 12 *and ... and it's always the same*
- 13 *and there's no way (deep breath).*
- 14 *Then I'd like to mmm ...*
- 15 *let's see if he can go out ... and mmm ...*
- 16 *then he I do think that then if ...*
- 17 *if he met a good girl that he ... he liked,*
- 18 *Because I speak a lot with him ... and he and ... mmm ... tells me ... (click)*
- 19 *But ... there is no way to make him go out nor ... (deep breath).*
- 20 *And it's a pity*
- 21 *because he's mmm ... such a good son,*
- 22 *he's an angel (deep breath),*
- 23 *very hard working ... (stutters),*

How then does the listener follow the narrator through this broken or chaotic discourse? How does the narrator call the listener's attention through the different stories and help him or her build the final coherent narrative?

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GUIDING THE LISTENER THROUGH THE STORIES

In the following section, we summarize the main theoretical concepts coming from Cognitive Linguistics, which have helped to understand the main processes which enable listeners to follow the apparently chaotic information contained in emotional oral narratives. In the main, the notions of *mental spaces*, *integration* and *attention phenomena* are addressed.

3.1. *Mental spaces and conceptual integration theory in emotional oral narratives*

Considering the fragmented structure of these narratives, the conceptual tools of Mental Spaces and Conceptual Integration Theory (MSCI) (Fauconnier 1997, 2007; Fauconnier and 2002; Turner 2007) have been especially valuable to understand how the reader is capable of integrating the fragmented information appearing in different *narrative spaces* into one final coherent one.

According to this theory, mental spaces are very partial assemblies constructed as we think for purposes of local understanding and action (Fauconnier 1997, 2007; Fauconnier and Turner 2002). When applied to discourse, it explains how, in the unfolding of discourse, a rich array of mental spaces is set up with mutual connections from one space to another, interacting and blending with each other and activating others.

The different side stories or *input narrative spaces* present in highly emotional radio oral narratives, used to give background information, fill in the temporal and causal gaps, and bring in feelings, explanations and self-justifications, are not clearly set up at the offset of these narratives. The *emergent story* arises through a gradually increasing network of emergent cross-mappings and blends coming from the different spaces and our collective cultural knowledge. The narrator leads the hearer through this network of incomplete narrative spaces by means of *space builders*, i.e. attentional or pragmatic and discourse markers which signal the beginning of a new segment or the resuming of a discontinuous one. Thus, it is the hearer who connects the different *input narrative spaces* as the process unfolds, until the story reaches a satisfying degree of coherence by means of *emergent cross-mappings* or *projections*. Therefore, from a MSCI approach, oral narratives can be understood as *complex, dynamic systems* in which a series of incomplete, embedded stories compete for attention and attentional markers help the hearer select the *figure* or foregrounded information against the *landmark* or mass of background information presented by the narrator throughout the narrative process.

The online construction of meaning in radio oral narratives of highly emotional events, thus, implies the same cognitive processes used elsewhere in language: maintaining the activation of a space already set up, elaborating many spaces at the same

time, blending the spaces into a higher level structure, adding cultural knowledge, etc. Within this approach, the present paper focuses on the segmental or structural level of the narrative process construction, that is, on the specific discourse markers that signal segment or space transitions.

3.2. *Attention phenomena and emotional oral narratives*

Attention is a general cognitive ability that allows to interpret the world around us by focusing on small parts of it at a time. Visual attention is often explained through the metaphor of a *spotlight* that would consecutively illuminate small parts of a whole scene that we would later put together in our minds in order to compose the whole picture, our own mental image of it. This way of perceiving, processing and interpreting the world is reflected in the way we speak about it, that is to say, in language. Languages provide several mechanisms that allow both speakers and hearers to go through discourse focusing on small parts of it and then construct a whole mental image of what is being said. Thus, the correlate of the spotlight metaphor for language would be Talmy's (1996) *windowing of attention*: a cognitive process by which a portion of a referent situation is foregrounded in discourse while the rest is backgrounded or *gapped* (Talmy 2000: 257). Attention works at all linguistic levels –phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic– and they all combine and interact in order to graduate the strength of attention drawn to a specific linguistic entity. They all constitute the *Attentional System of Language*, which allows assigning different degrees of salience to the different parts of an expression (Talmy 2000, 2007, 2008; Langacker 2001, 2008).

Grosz and Sidner (1986) also studied the computational processing of discourse and found that the structure of discourse is “a composite of three interacting constituents: a linguistic structure, an intentional structure and an attentional state” (1986: 177). They claimed that this distinction among components is essential to explain, for example, interruptions, as well as the use of some expressions that affect discourse segmentation and structure. They also pointed out that the attentional state is a property of the discourse itself, not only of the discourse participants and that it is inherently dynamic since it evolves as the discourse proceeds.

In oral narratives, attention plays an essential role in order to make sense of the chaotic overlapping of side stories. The listener's attention must be directed to the specific portion of discourse active at a given point and then moved to the next, backgrounding the previous ones either partially or completely. Discourse markers are the most obvious devices to do so, even if not the only ones. Other pragmatic markers such as intonation, repetition of lexical items, of ideas, breathings and sighs are also common devices to mark transitions or to increase attention on a particular segment. All these attention guiding strategies explain how, as listeners, we make sense of the maze of overlapping stories or discourse segments usually activated simultaneously in real discourse settings.

Following Talmy's words: "increased attention on a linguistic entity is regularly accompanied by additional cognitive effects such as distinctness, clarity and significance, while decreased attention correlates with such converse effects as melledness, vagueness and ordinariness" (Talmy 2007: 265). This means that attention is intentionally increased or decreased on a particular point of discourse with a definite aim. In oral narratives, these aims may involve seeking empathy, understanding or trying to make information significant for the listener. In order to do so, a number of attentional markers heap up in those sections that the narrator judges more relevant for his/her aims.

We see that in the narratives under study, more attention is given to the emotional parts of the stories, sections which are highly marked by combining intonation, repairs, repetitions, sighs, pauses, and more discourse markers, among others. Whereas those segments which are merely narrative are usually unmarked or only signalled by intonation or other lower attention marking devices. As an example, see again lines 1 to 23 in HbN3, included in section 2, in which the narrator uses 38 pragmatic markers: 24 medium to long pauses (... , 1/2 second or more), 2 clicks, 5 deep breaths or sighs, 1 stuttering and 6 interjections or 'mms', in 23 lines or 197 items, including words and pragmatic markers⁴. This means, that 19.2% of the words or items are pragmatic markers, carrying evaluative meanings, functioning as emotion stallers, etc.

Let us now have a look at the methodological tools used to analyse the explicit cues used by narrators to present their stories while disclosing their most intimate worries and emotions.

4. METHODOLOGY: SEGMENTING THE STORIES

The methodological tools used for the segmentation of the radio narratives and the identification the attentional markers signalling transitions follow Redeker's (2006) notational system in the main. Starting from Grosz and Sidner's (1986) computational approach to discourse segmentation, Redeker (2006) distinguishes between *paratactic transitions* between segments that follow each other at the same level, that is, one segment is completed and followed by the next one, and *hypotactic transitions* which involve the interruption or suspension of an incomplete unit with parenthetical material (Redeker 2006: 344). Examples of paratactic segment transitions are: end of segment, next segment and return to a previous segment. Whereas examples of hypotactic transitions, which vary widely in function and in disruptiveness, are: digression or interruption, specification or definition, paraphrase, explication or clarification, background information, commentary, correction or emendation and quotes (Redeker 2006: 345). Thus, hypotactic transitions precede segments including the feelings, explanations and self-justifications that pop into the narrators' minds as they try to organize their stories; whereas paratactic transitions signal the transitions between the different stories contained in a narrative, that is, the global structure of the texts.

This study concentrates mainly on the paratactic transitions, and on those discourse markers that the narrator uses in order to guide the listener in and out of the many and

embedded narrative spaces present in radio oral narratives of highly emotional events. We have distinguished five main types of marked transitions: i) openings, i.e. how narrators initiate their stories; ii) next section or pushes into flashbacks or background information; iii) moves from side stories back into a previous story; iv) end of segment sections; and v) final closing or end of the narrative.

At this point, it is important to clarify the concept of discourse and pragmatic marker followed in this work, namely the notion of discourse marker by Fraser (1996, 1999) and Norrick (2007, 2009), which includes a variety of elements usually occupying initial position in conversational turns or utterances, and performing pragmatic or discursive functions. This ‘large conception’ of discourse marker includes both linguistic items that explicitly relate two units of talk or discourse –usually called discourse markers in the literature (Schiffrin 1987; Cuenca 2006), as well as other modal or emotional markers such as intonation, clicks, long pauses, re-doings and repetitions, nervous laughs and deep breathing, among other pragmatic markers. Nevertheless, even though both linguistic and non-linguistic markers have been included in the qualitative analysis of the data, only the first more linguistic elements have been incorporated in the quantitative analysis. This is the reason why, in section five we use the term pragmatic marker as a general umbrella term covering all elements functioning as transition markers, and the term discourse marker for the quantitative analysis of the linguistic markers performing this function.

Another feature of the pragmatic markers identified in the oral narrative under study is that they are polyfunctional or polysemic, in the sense that they both modulate the interpretation of the utterances and have discourse structuring features, as mentioned above (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberghe 2006; Norrick 2007, 2009; Cuenca and Marín 2009; among others). Besides, we agree with Romero (2006) that what we find in discourse is not just a series of discourse markers, but rather discourse slots (functions) filled by elements that may vary according to regional, idiolectal, or sociolinguistic features (Romero 2006: 640). This explains, as will be detailed in section five below, that some of the narrators in our corpus use idiosyncratic expressions as markers, as in the case of *siempre/nunca* (‘always’, ‘never’) and *por una vez* (‘for once in life’) (HbN7) or *y no hay forma* (‘and there’s no way’) (HbN3). These expressions or pragmatic markers can best be understood as having undergone a process of discourse grammaticalization by including in their semantic/grammatical meaning a pragmatic dimension that has interactional purposes (Romero 2006: 640).

5. DISCUSSION

In this section we first describe the structuring features and devices that narrators use to signal different narrative segments or spaces in the radio narratives under study, and, second, we present a quantitative analysis of the discourse markers or space builders present in the texts.

5.1. *Main structuring devices*

As already mentioned, due to the spontaneity and highly emotional contents of the oral radio narratives analysed in this work, one of their most salient features is the continuous fragmentation of their structure, broken by the different interruptions containing commentaries, background information, feelings, self-justifications, etc. We next describe the main structuring strategies used to start and close narratives, as well as those which signal internal transitions from one story or narrative space to another.

- (a) The opening of the narratives is usually unmarked, as in narratives HbN3, HbN5, HbN6, HbN7 and HbN8. Narrators initiate the main story directly, with no introductory markers or phrases, interrupting it abruptly some words later with different types of parenthetical information. HbN9 starts off with a single marker *eh...* plus a noticeable long pause; HbN10 with *pues...* (well); and HbN1 with the marked use of the 1st person pronoun, *Yo...* (I), pronounced in a very slow, long falling intonation and followed by a pause as well. Contrary to these slightly marked openings, there are two well-delimited beginnings with whole clauses: *La historia es la siguiente* (the story is as follows) (HbN4), and *Mi historia es...* (my story is) (HbN2). The opening of HbN2 is especially interesting because of the chain of markers that the narrator introduces: *Pues nada... mi historia es que... eh... yo pues... soy... yo... mi madre...* (well, nothing,... my story is ... eh ... I well ... am ... I ... my mother). In this narrative, the speaker is about to explain that he was abandoned at an orphanage when he was seven, as a precedent to tell his main story on how he met his father, but apparently this circumstance is so painful that he cannot find a way to start. Such long chains of opening markers function as emotional *stallers* or *delayers*, giving narrators time to think and ‘get ready’ for the task of recounting painful intimate events.
- (b) The final closures of the narratives under study are also quite unmarked and vague, a fact that can be related to the main contextual features of the texts. In the first place, the events being told usually belong to the present life of narrators and, therefore, have not finished. In the second, most narrators are uncertain about the reason for calling and thus, do not know where or how to stop. And third, the passivity of the listeners; in most cases we only know the radio narrative has finished because of a sudden silence after which the presenter decides to finish the story with a simple: “Thank you, is that all?”. Examples of closing utterances from the corpus are: *Y no le dijo nada* (And he didn’t say anything) (HbN1); *que... que... ¡madre mía! estoy desesperada [suspiro grande], que no sé qué, no sé qué más decirte* (that ... that ... Gosh! I’m desperate [big sigh], I don’t know, I don’t know what else to say) (HbN5). Especially interesting are the closures of HbN6, HbN7 and HbN10, where the narrators suddenly stop after a marker that is usually conceived as a speech continuer. The speaker in narrative HbN6 stops his narrative after a tag question:

¿no?, which is clearly a prompt for the listener to respond; HbN7 comes to an end after an adversative *pero...* (but); and HbN10 uses a result marker: *o sea ...* (I mean), clearly expecting an ensuing response, that does not occur.

- (c) Contrary to the openings and closures of the texts, the internal segments or narrative spaces are clearly marked, that is, those segments where a new secondary story is initiated or resumed after an interruption: next sections or pushes and returns or pops. Not surprisingly, it is at these points in the texts where the narrator needs to guide the listeners, since both the transition towards a new story, and the return back to a previously active one might be confusing. The *focus space* or *window of attention* must be always well signalled so that the listener can keep track in the apparent labyrinth of flashbacks, comments and feelings that wrap up the main story and intention of the narrator.

The transitions to and from these side spaces are marked by explicit phrases and deictic changes, in addition to discourse markers. Examples of explicit phrases introducing a new story or narrative space are:

- *Y el tema es que ...* (and the thing is...) (HbN1)
- *Pero por supuesto lo que me preocupa es que* (but of course what I am worried about is that...) (HbN9)
- *Es el... no quería integrarme en ese tema pero...* (it is the... I didn't want to get into that topic, but...) (HbN10)
- *El caso es que...* (the thing is...) (HbN8)
- *El problema fue que* (the problem was that) (HbN8)
- *Pues la verdad es que* (well the truth is that) (HbN2)

Similar structures and expressions also serve the purpose of resuming a story that had been interrupted (pops); in other words, bringing the listener back to the main narrative or mental space:

- *Y el problema es que.. que yo...* (and the problem is that...that I...) (HbN6)
- *Lo que pasa es que* (the thing is that...) (HbN1)
- *El caso es que ... se puede decir...* (the thing is that... you could say ...) (HbN5)
- *Y eso ... la verdad pues* (and that... the truth is...) (HbN2)

In some of the narratives analysed, the speaker explicitly indicates that the next section is separated from what came before:

- *Aparte de que...* (apart from ...) (HbN1)
- *Y aparte pues* (and apart from that, well...) (HbN10)
- Whereas returns to the main narrative space are sometimes presented as results:
- *Resultaba que* (and it turned out...) (HbN2)
- *Y resulta de que mm... pues* (and it turns out that mm, well...) (HbN3)

Another obvious way to introduce a side story or to resume a previous one is by introducing a temporal marker:

- *Pues yo cuando... pues...* (well I, when I ... well) (HbN4)
- *A partir de ahora...* (and from now on...) (HbN4)
- *Y a día de hoy pues...* (and to this day, well...) (HbN1)
- *Y bueno... y al tiempo pues...* (and well... and after some time...) (HbN2)
- *Al principio pues...* (at the beginning well...) (HbN2)
- *Pero luego* (but then) (HbN4)

Deictic changes, change of verb tense or the insertion of temporal clauses are also common strategies used by narrators to signal a shift into a new mental space located in a different time from that of the main story:

- *Hasta que un día estábamos en un bar* (until one day we were at a bar) (HbN2)
- *Hace cosa de... de dos años aproximadamente* (it was about... about two years ago approximately) (HbN8)
- *La otra noche vi...* (the other night I saw...) (HbN10)

A change of referents also helps to mark a shift in focus of attention. Unmarked transitions are actually signalled by the introduction of a new agent for the events narrated, or by the repetition of the referent when recovering a backgrounded space. Hence, there are new spaces marked with new referents:

- *Mi esposa evidentemente...* (my wife obviously...) (HbN8)
- *Esta relación, a su vez* (this relationship, as well...) (HbN8)
- *Mi madre es...* (my mother is...) (HbN6)
- *Mi sobrina eh... se sube...* (my niece eh.. she gets on...) (HbN5)
- *Eh... mi hermana ha hablao...* (eh... my sister has spoken...) (HbN5)

This is also the case of those transitions in which the narrator intentionally and redundantly uses a personal pronoun as the subject of the sentence, which is usually omitted in everyday Spanish oral speech:

- *Yo, la respuesta que le di* (I, the answer I gave him was) (HbN1)
- *Yo sí hablo* (I do speak with...) (HbN3)
- *Ellos no quisieron* (they didn't want) (HbN4)

To this point, we have seen how the beginning of new narrative spaces or the foregrounding of previously active ones are introduced by apparently 'unmarked' devices, such as the change of tense or referents, or by conventional time markers and explicit phrases and sentences. However, this is only the case in a small part of the narratives. As we have claimed above, what is especially significant in the structure of radio oral narratives of charged events is the accumulation of discourse markers at those transition points, next sections and pops, where the speaker wants the hearer to concentrate his/her attention.

5.2. Quantitative analysis of discourse markers

A quantitative analysis of the discourse markers used in our corpus as attentional markers for transitions casts the following results, shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 below:

Markers	Occurrences
<i>Y</i> (and)	68
<i>Pues</i> (well)	37
<i>Yo</i> (I)	21
<i>Bueno</i> (well)	19
<i>Pero</i> (but)	16
<i>El tema/ problema es...</i> (the thing/problema is...)	10
<i>Es que</i> (the thing is/Ø)	9
<i>Ya</i> (and now/Ø)	8
<i>No sé</i> (I don't know)	7
<i>Porque</i> (because)	7
<i>Entonces</i> (then)	6
<i>O sea</i> (I mean)	6
<i>Claro</i> (of course/really)	4
<i>Luego</i> (then)	4
<i>¿no? + ¿sabes?</i> (isn't it?)	3+1
<i>Resulta(ba) que</i> (it turned out that)	2
<i>La verdad</i> (the truth is)	2
<i>Aparte</i> (apart from)	2

Table 1. Total number of transitional attentional markers.



Figure 1. Attentional markers used for transitions.

As expected, polysemous or polyfunctional markers like *y* (and) or *pues* (well) are among the most frequent ones. However, it must be noted, though, that these markers very rarely appear alone. Most of the times, what we find is a combination or heaping up of markers:

- *Pero bueno* (but well) (HbN9)
- *Y bueno pues...* (and well then) (HbN6)
- *Y bueno es que ya es que...* (and well the thing is that now it's) (HbN5)
- *Y bueno entonces pues yo .. pues no sé..yo...* (and well then well I... well I don't know... I...) (HbN2)
- *Y eso la verdad pues* (and that, the truth well) (HbN6)
- *Pero claro ehh* (but of course ehh) (HbN1)
- *Porque claro* (because of course) (HbN9)

This last feature must be interpreted in relation to the fact that attention is gradual (Talmy 2007), so the accumulation of discourse markers and other pragmatic devices, such as pauses, repetitions and rising intonation, intends to attract the listener's attention towards the most salient stories, which in the texts under study coincide with the most emotionally charged ones.

As for the meanings of discourse markers, we must point out that they are not entirely influential for their function. So, for instance, a causal marker, *porque* (because), can be found at the beginning of a new narrative space: *porque el día que lo vea* (because the day I see him) (HbN4), *porque ya les dije* (because I already told them) (HbN4), or functioning as a next section maker, signalling the return to a previous one: *porque es que no hay forma* (because there is no way) (HbN3), or appearing as the marker of the end of a section (es): *porque claro, esto se ve venir* (because of course, you can see it coming) (HbN9). In all these occurrences, the causal meaning of the expression does not seem to play a clear role in these functions. Even if it is possible to consider that there is a causal relation that leads to the conclusion of the section, or to the return of the previous one, the relationship with the meaning is not definite, since the same marker is used in all positions or functions. As pointed out above, this is even more significant when a contrastive marker, *pero...* (but...) (HbN7), or an explicative one, *o sea* (I mean) (HbN10), is used without a complementary clause in order to mark the closing of the narrative.

It is interesting to note that the ends of sections are not usually heavily marked, whereas the transitions to new sections, or returns to previous ones, are. Although it is possible to find expressions that signal that a space is abandoned, such as question tags *¿no?* (HbN6, HbN9), *¿sabes?* (HbN5), or concluding remarks *y así se quedó la cosa* (and that's how it ended) (HbN1), *y así* (and so it was) (HbN3), *y no sé* (and I don't know) (HbN8); it is far more common to indicate the end of a section by a long pause, deep breathing or just by using a closing, falling intonation. Apparently, narrators prefer to guide the listeners towards new spaces without definitely closing previous ones, so that it is always possible to activate them when needed. Only those that are not

intentionally recovered by narrators seem to be closed by fading away in the participants working memory. Still, there is a noteworthy exception in narrative HbN3. The speaker of this narrative is worried because there is no way she can make her son go out and socialize after his girlfriend has died. She repeats the expression *no hay forma* (there's no way) seven times and uses it both as an end of section marker and as a pop or return marker. On the one side, with this expression, the narrator abandons the main story or narrative space every time she introduces a comment, flashback or explanation, and so directs the hearer's attention to the new space. On the other, she uses the very same expression in order to return to the story after those interruptions, keeping the space into focus along the whole narrative.

From this first analysis of the data it is possible to conclude that there is a fixed repertoire of discourse markers that can be used as attentional cues to direct the listener's attention in radio oral narratives of emotionally charged events. In this repertoire, *y* (and), *pues* (well) and *bueno* (well) are among the most common ones. However, in the ten narratives analyzed, they are not commonly used alone, but rather in combinations whose length and complexity vary depending on the degree of attention the narrator intends to concentrate on a certain point of the discourse. The selection and combination of markers, even though from a common repertoire, is entirely up to the speaker and, this is the reason why it is not possible to find a correspondence between the meanings of the markers and their function in the structuring of the narrative.

As a matter of fact, each speaker seems to show a preference towards a limited number of markers that she/he uses for different purposes. Thus, for instance, Figure 2 shows how the marker *pues* (well) is used by narrators 2 and 4 to a great extent in contrast to the other speakers. Figure 3 depicts even bigger differences in the individual uses of *bueno* (well), a highly salient marker for narrators 2 and 9, whereas practically insignificant for speakers 1, 7, 8 and 10.

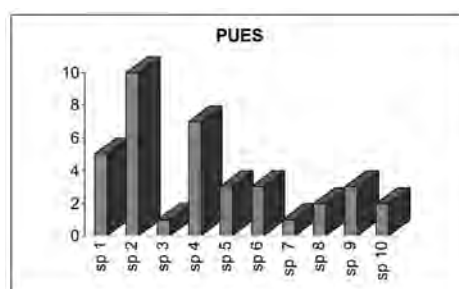


Figure 2. Use of *pues* in the corpus.

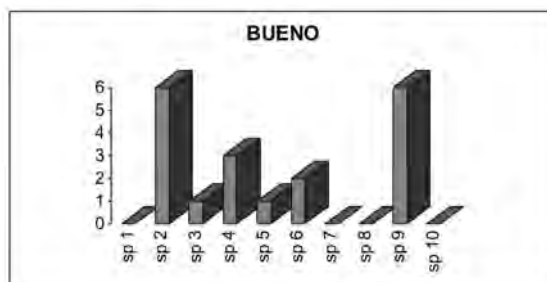


Figure 3. Use of bueno in the corpus.

In the same line, Figure 4 shows the clear preference of narrator 8 towards the use of *no sé* (I don't know) and *es que* (the thing is), which amount to only 3% and 4% in the total (see Figure 1), rather than other more common markers such as *bueno* (well), which is the most frequent option of narrator 9.

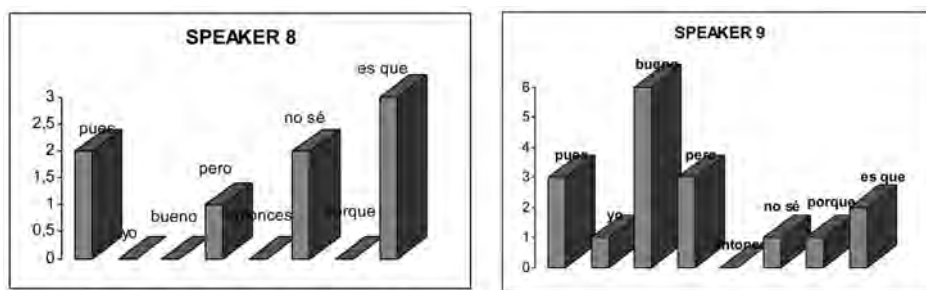


Figure 4. Individual preferences of speakers 8 and 9.

Furthermore, we see how narrator 7 chooses to mark the transitions between narrative spaces in his narrative with expressions that are not part of the conventional repertoire of discourse markers, i.e. by opposing *siempre/nunca* (always/never) 6 times to *por una vez* (for once) –used four times, while narrator 3 repeats *no hay forma* (there's no way) up to 7 times at different points in her narrative, both to open and to close her main stories.

All these data reveal that room exists for idiolectal variation in the selection of structuring attentional markers of oral discourse. Thus, even when language provides a wide range of conventional expressions and structures to mark transitional spaces in oral narratives, speakers show individual preferences towards a number of them, which they feel free to combine discretionally. As this work shows, narrators design their own strategies and choose an expression that is not ordinarily used as a marker in this type of discourse in order to fulfil their main purpose in delivering the stories: to direct the listener's attention through their different mental spaces and create a bridge of empathy and understanding with their audience.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mental Spaces and Conceptual Integration Theory has proved useful for the analysis of the apparently chaotic structure of a particular kind of oral narratives, those unplanned, spontaneous ones that disclose highly emotional events to complete strangers in a radio programme. The theory provides a sound explanation of the way in which narrators guide their audience, and the way in which listeners manage to construct the global meaning of the stories.

In addition, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the structuring discourse markers of the 10 Spanish oral narratives under study has proved that:

- (i) As expected, there is a wide range of common markers used in this text type, shown in Table 1, of which *y* (and), *pues* (so, well), *yo* (I) and *bueno* (good, well) are the most frequent (Figure1).
- (ii) This wide range of markers identified in the narratives, follows attention and perceptual phenomena, since a gradual cline of markedness has been identified. Markers, thus, range from slightly unmarked or *unconscious* (change in tense, referents, etc.) to long *interruptive* combinations of juxtaposed markers (*y bueno entonces pues yo.. pues no sé...yo* (and well then well I... well I don't know... I...)) (HbN2); especially when introducing the most emotional sections of the stories in order to attract the listener's attention.
- (iii) The same discourse markers or cue expressions can fulfil any segment function: push into new stories or spaces, return to the main story, end of section and even closing the whole narrative. The discourse markers identified in the narratives are not isomorphic, but polysemous and polyfunctional.
- (iv) Also idiolectal preferences have been identified. It is interesting to see how narrators choose from a common repertoire of segmenting devices, to then incorporate and repeat one of the expressions with different meanings and functions throughout their own narrative style.

In agreement with Redeker (2006), Grosz & Sidner (1986) and Bestgen and Vonk (1995), we think segmenting discourse markers are not absolutely 'necessary' for the comprehension of the narrative structure but certainly facilitate the listener's meaning construction process by helping the relevant spaces to remain active or to be reinstated more easily, which in short, helps listeners access narrators' emotions and/or mental spaces. In the narratives under study, discourse markers convey additional cognitive effects which are crucial in seeking the listener's empathy while helping him or her select the most salient information in order to build the final emergent story.

As a result, it is possible to conclude that the particular fragmented structure and the idiolectal variation of discourse and pragmatic markers are characteristic of this kind of texts, and the product of the contextual circumstances in which they take place. Our approach to language coincides with Bernárdez's (2008) socio-cognitive approach: "a product of a socially-conditioned, activity-driven cognition (...) an essentially cultural and social object which is then incorporated in individuals".

NOTES

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- ¹ Study carried out under the funding of the research projects FFI2009-13582 and FFI2012-30790, Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.
- ² For further account on discourse as a social practice, see Bhatia (2002).
- ³ For a complete analysis of HbN3 see: Porto, D. and Romano, M. 2010. "Conceptual integration in natural oral narratives". *Actes des Journées d'Étude "Narratology and the New Social Dimension of Narrative"*. (<http://narratologie.echess.fr/index.php?681>).
- ⁴ Notice that other pragmatic strategies such as repetitions and repairs, also very frequent in this text type, have not been included.

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APPENDIX

HBH3 (LINES 1-23) IN SPANISH

- 1 Tengo un hijo que... (click)..
- 2 bueno, hace ya ... como dos años que tenía una ... una chica.
- 3 Se iban a casar y ... ya tenían todo ...
- 4 y resulta de que ... mmm ... la víspera de Reyes (respiración)
- 5 pues iba en el coche ella
- 6 y ... tuvo un accidente y murió.

- 7 Quería saber a ver que ...
- 8 Porque es que no hay forma de sacarle de casa ... desde entonces.
- 9 Está totalmente mmm ... metido en casa,
- 10 no quiere salir (respiración),
- 11 está agobiadísimo
- 12 y ... y siempre igual
- 13 y no hay forma (respiración).
- 14 Entonces yo quería que mmm ...
- 15 a ver si puede salir ... y mmm ...
- 16 Ya él yo ya creo que ya si ...
- 17 si encontrara una buen chica que le ... le gustara,
- 18 Porque yo hablo mucho con él ... y él y ... mmm ... me cuenta (click)
- 19 Pero (.....) no hay forma de hacerle salir a ningún sitio ni ... (respiración).
- 20 Y es una pena
- 21 porque es mmm ... un hijo tan bueno,
- 22 es un cielo (respiración),
- 23 muy trabajador ... (titubea).

PART TWO
GENRE AND THE LSP LEARNING CONTEXT

